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HOMICIDE IN THE SOUTHERN STATES.

Outside observers, including those most friendly disposed towards the South, often dwell upon the low estimate our section puts upon human life and the light regard paid by Southern people generally to the crime of murder. That such strictures are well merited, no one who looks into the subject candidly could deny ; for it is unfortunately true that in no other part of this country, as long settled as the South has been, are murders so frequent or human life so cheap. It is useless to deny this ; it is worse than foolish to endeavor to palliate it. Nor is it the part of wisdom to seek in the number of homicides elsewhere some condonation of that worst of all crimes, whose great prevalence among us is rapidly causing our section, and indeed even our nation, to become a byword among the enlightened peoples of the earth. Things have come to such a pass that one can scarcely pick up a daily newspaper without finding the sickening details of one or more murders, often committed under circumstances of unparalleled atrocity, while the perpetrators of these dark deeds are seldom punished. The South is weary of these crimes ; the country is weary of them ; the world is weary of them. Men disagree, often about the merest trifle, and everybody expects a row, which usually not only really does take place, but is frequently accompanied by the violent death of one or more of the persons involved, whose lives might have been saved if a little coolness and good sense had been exercised. How often, moreover, the newspaper in chronicling these "difficulties" and "sad occurrences," after describing the stereotyped "gloom" of the community, adds significantly, "further trouble is expected." And how often, too, are such expectations realized, when the kinsmen of the deceased undertake to avenge his death. Then again, who has failed to note the growing frequency of lynchings, whose shocking

barbarity is beginning to arouse universal horror and indignation?

Foreign critics often claim that homicide is a national sin with us; and a few years ago an article appeared in one of the leading English magazines in which it was alleged that the Americans grow more bloodthirsty the further they advance towards maturity as a people. This may or may not be true. But some color is lent to the charge, when one realizes the reckless disregard for life often manifested by those engaged in the transportation of passengers and the housing of the poor, to say nothing of bad sanitary regulations in the larger cities of the New World. This, however, is quite a different thing from premeditated murder and manslaughter committed in the heat of passion, which, excepting New England, are of far too frequent occurrence in a land as old and as advanced as the United States. The gravest feature of Southern homicides, however, lies in the fact that they are often committed by a class of persons one would least suspect of crime; least of all, of the crime of murder. People who have never visited the Southern States but only read of these deeds of violence, are not infrequently inclined to smile when the principals are referred to as "members of prominent families" or "leading citizens." It is sometimes urged, for example, by those ignorant of the facts, that it is impossible to conceive of a man of gentility taking part in the brawls of ruffians or deliberately setting about the killing of a human being, and that while murderous controversies are of more or less frequency everywhere, they are almost invariably confined to the ruder elements of society. That, so far as the South is concerned, this is a mistake, no fair-minded person would be slow to admit. As a matter of fact, while the meaner order of Southern folk often do settle their differences of opinion in the same manner similar classes would everywhere else adopt, in the absence of wholesome legal and moral restraints, it is undeniably true that in the Southern States men of a certain amount of education, and often en-

joying the highest social standing, are not infrequently guilty of the most shocking homicides that ever stained the calendar of a court. Farmers, merchants, bankers, physicians, lawyers, even ministers of the gospel, often slay their fellow-man in private warfare, and after a mock trial are set at liberty, not only with no serious detriment to their reputation, but in many instances with increased popularity. If this is an exaggeration, on what other grounds are we to account for the amazing spectacle, witnessed a few years ago, of several members of Congress who had previously been accused of homicide, representing the same Southern State at the same time? Nor can it possibly have escaped the attention of anyone that whenever a person accused of homicide lacks the influence of money or family or politics, he stands in much greater danger of conviction than if he had enjoyed any of these advantages. In case the victim of homicide is a negro, the formality of a trial is sometimes altogether dispensed with, particularly if the black had enjoyed the reputation of being "sassy" or "uppish;" so when the luckless black finally meets the doom predicted for him, the offense is overlooked by those who believe the act "had to be done."

The whites, of course, are not the only ones who commit murder in the South, for the blacks also have their full share of blame. The great difference, however, between the crimes of the two races appears to lie in the fact that while the law's infraction by colored persons is punished, that by white persons is unpunished, or in other words homicide among the negroes is a crime, but among the whites it is a private affair. The blacks commit most of the murders where robbery or rape is the object. They seldom slay a white man, however, for purposes of revenge, or as the result of a sudden quarrel, long habits of enforced obedience having created in them a sense of inferiority. Besides, as everybody well knows, the negro is naturally the most docile of races, and occasional outbreaks on his part nowadays may be almost invariably traced to the doors

of the meaner whites—those whose sole cause of pride is their complexion. But the proneness of the blacks to assault white women, frequently putting them to death with savage ferocity, has done more to injure the negroes of the South than all other causes combined, since slavery vanished from America. To add that those accused of such crimes are rarely given a regular trial, but are often slain by every form of torture a mob can devise, would be but stating a fact with which we are all perfectly familiar.

Curiously enough, the murder of white men by members of their own race, is far more frequent in the South to-day than ever before, and notwithstanding the fact that the machinery of local government is everywhere in the hands of the Caucasian, this internecine warfare is almost everywhere on the increase. When one begins to seek an explanation of this extraordinary phenomenon, one finds that the causes producing it are numerous. One man says something about another or over-reaches him in a business transaction or ill uses one's female relative. The two men meet, as often by design as by accident, and since it is almost universally customary in many sections of the South for the average man to carry at least one revolver in the hip-pocket—everywhere in the Southern States significantly called the "pistol pocket"—the trial by battle occurs. The shooting is liable to take place wherever the parties meet, whether at church or in the courthouse, in the street, in the cars, or elsewhere. As the firing is at close range, it generally results in the killing of at least one of the men, usually the one who failed in first pulling out his revolver. Here and there an innocent bystander is killed. If a trial, or what is euphemistically called a trial, takes place, the prisoner (courteously designated the accused) sets up the plea of self-defense, which in nine cases out of ten is sustained, for long before the trial occurs friends of the murderer are ingeniously working in the community to create sympathy in his favor. The dead man's faults are recalled, but his murderer's good traits are emphasized. No small

wonder, therefore, that on the day of the so-called trial a complete reversal of public sentiment is noticeable, and the jury either brings in a verdict of acquittal or else the prisoner escapes punishment through a "disagreement." A very remarkable circumstance connected with these homicides is the failure of friends to effect a reconciliation between the parties and the neglect of those charged with the enforcement of the law to arrest men who are known to be armed for the express purpose of shedding blood. For in by far the greater number of "difficulties" it is known beforehand just what is about to happen, intimations of an impending struggle being whispered on the streets or in the country store, and everybody is listening for the reports of firearms that are to send one or more citizens into eternity. Yet scarcely a word is spoken or a step taken towards preventing the crime. Shooting at sight is the successor of the old system of duelling without that system's formality and efforts at fairness, since no duelist of the ancient régime would have dared to fire upon an unarmed adversary. Duelling, therefore, bad as it was, was incomparably superior to the cowardly practice which succeeded it — a practice that not only permits a ruffian to take a man unawares, but often to stalk him as one would game.

Paradoxical though the statement may at first appear, with the growth of private warfare among the whites, there are less and less killings of blacks by whites or of whites by blacks, but this gratifying and cheering indication may be easily accounted for. Just after the close of the War of Secession race conflicts predominated, for the sense of a common suffering engendered during four years of excitement and anguish, was projected into the period of reconstruction, when the joint regency of the "carpet-bagger" and the "scalawag" welded the native whites, socially as well as politically. The ties of camp life also held the old soldiers together. It was no unusual thing in those days, however, for bloody battles to take place between the whites and blacks; but nowadays such conflicts are of rare oc-

currence in the more progressive Southern communities. Now and then a negro and a white man get into a quarrel which results in the killing of one or the other (usually it is the negro who is slain), but in by far the greater number of instances such disputes occur among the lower sorts of both races.

While homicides resulting from feuds and sudden quarrels are of frequent occurrence in the Southern States, murders committed for the purpose of robbery are surprisingly rare, and when they do occur as much horror is manifested there as in other parts of the country. It is true homicides of this type for the most part occur in the larger towns or in remote portions of the rural districts, but, all things considered, they are as rare, if not rarer, in the South than in some other localities of the Union. Being usually the work of the less thrifty class of negroes, crimes of this description are almost invariably punished. So also are malicious injuries to property, such as the mutilation of animals used on the farm and the theft of personalty. In other words, proprietary rights are of more consequence in the South than rights of the person. In regard to the butchery of helpless white females by black rapists, and the lynching of those accused of such crimes, something has already been said, but during the past year these forms of violence have been so often before the public as to demand a more than ordinary description. It would, first of all, be a mistake to assume, as is so often done by the uninformed, that negroes are charged with the crime of rape in order to find a pretext for putting them to death. On the contrary, few who pay the penalty of their lust in this illegal manner are guiltless of the offense with which they are charged, for the mob usually goes about its work with the deliberation of a judicial assembly. If, for example, the victim or the intended victim of the rapist is alive, the prisoner is usually conducted into her presence, an examination ensues, and if in the opinion of the vigilants the right man has been captured, the execution immediately takes place. Sometimes the

"leading citizens" of the community take part in such executions, but the rougher elements of society are usually the moving spirits of the lynching; and, although an occasional effort is made by the officers of the law to protect the prisoner, their resistance is usually purely technical, and meant solely for political effect. Indeed, the officers are often in league with the mob.

Assaults upon white women occur, for the most part, in the country or in the outskirts of towns where there is no police protection whatsoever, and while rare during the existence of slavery, appear now to be constantly increasing in number and violence. This may partly be attributable to the lack of steady employment and the increasing disinclination on the part of many of the blacks to work at anything. Hence the ranks of the vagrant class of negroes is being rapidly swelled, while the number of those exposed to the temptations of the idle is increased yearly. In other words, it is extremely rare to hear of a thrifty, respectable colored man committing rape; indeed, he is most outspoken in its condemnation, and even sometimes takes a hand in the lynching, when allowed to do so. The crime is usually committed either by a "strange nigger" or by the more shiftless resident blacks of the neighborhood. To the swinging body of the dead man the lynchers are accustomed to pin a placard, on which are written words to this effect: "The honor of our women shall be protected," and very often threats are made against persons who undertake to cut the corpse down before the expiration of a stated time. Do such measures protect women? They do not; for the more the lynchings, the more the rapes. Furthermore (and this is the saddest part of the whole miserable story) the woman is now almost invariably murdered by her assailant in order to seal her lips from the mob. Lynching, also, has departed from its original type, for while at first confined to the one crime of rape when indignant men swung a guilty wretch from the limb of a tree before any trial had taken place, men are sometimes lynched nowadays after the court

has sentenced them. Judge Lynch, moreover, has extended his jurisdiction, and now tries persons accused of murder, larceny, robbery, arson, or any other offense. Now it so happened that with the growth of mob law men gradually came to the conclusion that if a negro could be lynched for violating the ordinary rights of property, lynching was "too good for him" in the case of rape. Hence the rise of the practice of mutilating the body of the prisoner and burning him at the stake. So far from attempting to conceal their identity, the lynchers often do their work in broad daylight and in the more crowded thoroughfares of the larger towns, yet although these men are known, even to those whose duty it is to arrest them, next to nothing is done. If the matter comes up before the grand jury, it rarely goes any further.

Much of the lawlessness of the Southern States arises from the attempt to apply rules of procedure adopted centuries ago, to modern ways of thinking and acting. In spite of what is often said to the contrary, many upright persons are inclined to feel that something is radically wrong, when prisoners accused of the gravest crimes either escape punishment altogether, or by an undue exercise of the right of appeal, have their sentences postponed almost indefinitely. The truth of the matter is, the subtleties of the common law are often refined to a grotesquely ridiculous extent under the cultivation of backwoods jurists or dishonest practitioners. The low standard of legal education in the South, added to the system of electing judges for a term of years rather than during good behavior, is largely responsible for the growing frequency of homicides in our section. Of course there are still many able and reputable lawyers in the Southern States; but few people realize how rapidly the bar has deteriorated of late years. It is, therefore, scarcely to be wondered at that legal reforms are almost impossible or that cases are often tied up for years in litigation. Owing his position mainly to the influential members of the bar, the judge convenes court; one of the attorneys is "not ready;"

an adjournment is asked, and the petitioner being a personal or a political friend of the judge, the request is granted almost as a matter of course. Even if the case is ever tried, there is an amount of quibbling and vapping — sometimes lasting for several days — that would not be tolerated elsewhere. * It not infrequently happens that after all the harangues, and objections, and dilatory pleas without number, the mind of the juror, even though he is an intelligent man, is so bewildered and befogged that he is unable to form an opinion upon any subject, to say nothing of the practice of bribery, which is far more frequent in the South than one imagines. Plain, matter-of-fact sort of people, therefore, having grown weary of what appeared to them to be a travesty of justice, and with many prejudices against the negro, took hold of the subject of rape, and picturing to their minds what might take place if a trial occurred, resolved to execute the law in what seemed to them to be a less technical and uncertain manner. Then, again, there was a feeling of aversion when they contemplated the spectacle of a white woman facing a black man in court, for all such trials are public.

Two other forms of homicide, the shooting of persons engaged in stealing and the killing of persons fleeing from justice, are quite common in the Southern States. Every man, of course, has a right to protect his property, and it is the duty of an officer to arrest a lawbreaker; but it is one thing to defend one's house from burglars and quite another to slay a man robbing a hen roost or a potato patch. It is, moreover, a dangerous experiment to arm officers of the law with deadly weapons, and to virtually intrust them with the power of life and death over the members of a community.

In view of what has already been said, it is scarcely surprising to learn from the elaborate bulletin prepared a few years ago for the Department of the Interior by Mr. Frederick W. Wines, that of the 82,329 prisoners in the United States June 1, 1890, 7,351, or nearly 9 per cent.,

were charged with homicide, of which number 3,632 were in the South.¹ In other words, although the population of the Southern States is barely a third of that of the entire country, about one-half of the prisoners charged with homicide, are there. In the battle of Antietam, the bloodiest of the War of Secession, the total number of persons killed on both sides was scarcely four thousand. A more careful examination of the report of Mr. Wines, an excerpt from which appears on another page of this article, will reveal still more astonishing facts. In the year 1890, for example, the number of persons charged with homicide was identically the same in the States of Mississippi and Ohio, 217, yet the population of the latter State is three times as great as that of the former. In the same year 730 persons were accused of homicide in Texas, and although the population of Texas and of Massachusetts is about the same — being something over two million — yet the number of persons charged with homicide in Massachusetts in 1890, was but 86.

The statistics of Mr. Wines appear to assign the greater number of homicides to the so-called South Central States, including Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas, a region justly famous for its unexampled industrial activity. The last census fixed the population of the South Central States at 8,857,920. According to Mr. Wines, 2,545 prisoners were charged with homicide in those States in the year 1890. Italy, the European country where murders appear to be most frequent, has a population of some 29,699,785 — more than three times that of the above States. Italy's annual crop of murders is 2,470. It should be noted, however, that the Italian figures represent actual murders, rather than all varieties of homicides, as is the case with the American table, and do include prisoners serving long terms, as apparently the figures of Mr. Wines do. But it is no less interesting to

¹ It should be noted that in these figures, when comparison is made with those for 1880, care should be taken to allow for the counting twice of some long-term prisoners.

NUMBER OF PRISONERS CHARGED WITH HOMICIDE AND THE NUMBER IN EACH MILLION OF THE POPULATION IN 1890 AND 1880, THE ABSOLUTE AND RELATIVE INCREASE OR DECREASE, AND THE PERCENTAGES OF INCREASE AND DECREASE, BY STATES AND TERRITORIES.

Geographical Divisions	1890			1880			Increase		Decrease		Percentages	
	Population	Homi- cides	Ratio	Population	Homi- cides	Ratio	Absolute	Rela- tive	Abso- lute	Rela- tive	Increase	De- crease
The United States	62,622,250	7,351	117	50,155,783	4,608	92	2,743	25			27.17	
Maine	661,086	42	64	648,936	29	45	13	19			42.22	
New Hampshire	376,530	20	53	346,991	17	49	49	3			8.16	
Vermont	332,422	24	72	332,286	11	33	13	39			118.18	
Massachusetts	2,238,943	86	38	1,783,085	83	47	3			9		19.15
Rhode Island	345,506	15	43	276,531	11	40	4	3			7.50	
Connecticut	746,258	61	82	622,700	46	74	15	8			10.81	
New York	5,997,853	473	79	5,082,871	280	55	193	24		2	43.64	
New Jersey	1,444,933	78	54	1,131,116	63	56	15					3.57
Pennsylvania	5,258,014	288	55	4,282,891	180	42	108	13			30.95	
North Atlantic	17,401,545	1,087	62	14,507,407	720	50	367	12			24.00	
Delaware	168,493	6	36	146,608	8	55			2	19		34.55
Maryland	1,042,390	84	81	934,943	96	103			12	22		21.36
Dist of Columbia	230,392	10	43	177,624	9	51	1			8		15.69
Virginia	1,655,980	163	98	1,512,565	148	98	15					
West Virginia	762,794	67	88	618,457	32	52	35	36			69.23	
North Carolina	1,617,947	139	86	1,399,750	65	46	74	40			86.96	
South Carolina	1,151,149	158	137	995,577	87	87	71	50			57.47	
Georgia	1,837,353	347	189	1,542,180	187	121	160	68			56.20	
Florida	391,422	113	289	269,493	31	115	82	174			151.30	
South Atlantic	8,857,920	1,087	123	7,597,197	663	87	424	36			41.38	

Ohio	3,672,316	217	59	3,198,062	136	43	81	16	.....	.....	.....	37.21
Indiana	2,192,404	225	103	1,978,301	157	79	68	24	.....	.....	.....	30.38
Illinois	3,826,351	302	95	3,077,871	268	87	94	8	.....	.....	.....	9.20
Michigan	2,093,889	176	84	1,636,937	107	65	69	19	.....	.....	.....	29.23
Wisconsin	1,686,880	127	75	1,315,497	71	54	56	21	.....	.....	.....	38.89
Minnesota	1,301,826	65	50	780,773	52	67	13	.....	.....	.....	17	25.37
Iowa	1,911,896	115	60	1,624,615	92	57	23	3	.....	.....	.....	5.26
Missouri	2,679,184	233	87	2,168,380	234	108	.....	.....	1	21	.....	19.44
North Dakota	182,719	12	66	36,909	3	22	30	44	.....	.....	.....	200.00
South Dakota	328,808	21	64	98,268	.....	.....	9	42	.....	.....	69	190.91
Nebraska	1,058,910	70	66	452,402	61	135	85	33	.....	.....	.....	51.11
Kansas	1,427,096	173	121	996,096	88	88	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	37.50
North Central	22,362,279	1,796	80	17,364,111	1,269	73	527	7	.....	.....	.....	9.59
Kentucky	1,858,635	439	236	1,648,690	185	112	254	124	.....	.....	.....	110.71
Tennessee	1,767,518	297	168	1,542,359	180	117	117	51	.....	.....	.....	43.59
Alabama	1,513,017	336	222	1,262,595	174	138	102	84	.....	.....	.....	60.87
Mississippi	1,289,600	217	168	1,131,597	202	179	15	.....	.....	11	.....	6.15
Louisiana	1,118,587	328	293	939,946	178	189	150	104	.....	.....	.....	55.03
Texas	2,235,523	730	327	1,591,749	447	281	283	46	.....	.....	.....	16.37
Oklahoma	61,834	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	32.33
Arkansas	1,128,179	198	176	802,525	107	133	91	43	.....	.....	.....	40.61
South Central	10,972,893	2,545	232	8,919,371	1,473	165	1,072	67	.....	.....	.....	1,207.69
Montana	132,159	45	340	39,159	1	26	44	314	.....	.....	159	65.98
Wyoming	60,705	5	82	20,789	5	241	.....	.....	.....	.....	53	22.36
Colorado	412,198	76	184	194,327	46	237	30	.....	.....	.....	.....	205.98
New Mexico	153,593	55	358	119,595	14	117	41	241	.....	.....	.....	144.20
Arizona	59,620	54	966	40,440	15	371	39	535	.....	.....	.....	242.86
Utah	207,995	20	96	143,963	4	28	16	68	.....	.....	.....	21.24
Nevada	45,761	41	896	62,266	46	739	.....	157	5	.....	.....	43.26
Idaho	84,385	26	308	32,610	7	215	19	93	.....	.....	146	54.89
Washington	349,390	42	120	75,116	20	266	22	.....	.....	.....	.....	57.80
Oregon	313,767	54	172	174,768	19	109	35	63	.....	.....	8	2.26
California	1,208,130	418	346	864,694	306	354	112	.....	.....	.....	.....	1.10
Western	3,027,613	836	276	1,767,697	483	273	353	3	.....	.....	.....	.....

observe that the South Central States, where feuds are most virulent, embrace those mountainous regions least inhabited by negroes. One should also bear in mind that the Southern States contain few foreigners, the last census, for example, giving the ratio of foreign-born to native-born citizens in Alabama as 2.50, Tennessee 2.74, and Georgia 1.75; while the same ratio was in New York 38.73, Illinois 36.39, and Massachusetts 38.66.

The causes of this great blot upon the South have been already partly indicated. Quarrels, race antipathies, the defective administration of the law, apathy and indifference on the part of molders of public opinion — these are largely responsible for the deplorable lack of that regard for life one would hope to find. Then again, ignorance is everywhere the prolific mother of all varieties of transgressions, not to mention idleness and intemperance. Curiously enough, however, Mr. Wines shows that in 1890, 66.57 per cent. of all the prisoners in the United States charged with homicide had received an elementary education, and that 3.44 per cent. had enjoyed the privileges of higher training. He shows also that ignorance of a trade leads to crime; but 19.35 per cent. of those charged with homicide in 1890 were mechanics, 20.10 per cent. were total abstainers, and only 19.87 per cent. were returned as drunkards. In the South, climate seems to have very little to do with it, although the food and whisky consumed in many localities may contribute their due share towards the evil. Of course the influence of heredity should not be overlooked. How often, for example, does one hear of several generations of fighters "who died with their boots on." Mr. Wines is not inclined to agree with those who claim that homicides are, in a measure, due to maladministration. He says: "The sections in which there are the most executions are those in which there are the most lynchings. The number of executions and of lynchings reported by the sheriffs of the Southern States is identically the same. It is further to be noted that the largest number both of executions and of

lynchings is in the South Central division, where the average sentence for homicide is longest, and where the percentage of long sentences imposed by the courts is the highest." Additional light might have been thrown on the subject, however, by indicating the ratio of convictions in the case of the whites and the blacks respectively.

Slavery, of course, had a tendency in many ways to diminish one's regard for the life of others, since it developed among the whites mediæval conceptions of honor, and at the same time placed the blacks almost at the mercy of their owners. Notwithstanding this fact, however, the proprietary character of the slave afforded him a protection which he lost when made free; for under the slave codes it was no unusual thing for a white man to suffer death for killing another's slave. Then again, the agricultural character of the pursuits of the great majority of people has prevented the growth of a healthy public sentiment in many sections of the South and at the same time produced a tendency to rely upon self-help rather than upon a defective system of local government. Men of the more influential classes, too, often appear to think it somewhat degrading to appeal to the legally established tribunals when their "honor" is involved. This feeling may, of course, be directly traced to the patriarchal character of society in the days of slavery, when the father had almost complete control over the members of the family. Then again, the late war by accustoming the people for four years to bloodshed and violence, and the disorganization of society at the close of that struggle, have had no little to do with causing the crime of homicide in the South. Disbanded soldiers, for example, particularly those who had been engaged in irregular forms of warfare, often returned home to continue their excesses under the guise of "Ku-Klux" and "bushwhackers." In some portions of the Southern States these men instituted a reign of terror. Of course the better class of ex-Confederates usually discountenanced such misdoings and went to work to rebuild their shattered fortunes with sublime hero-

ism and the utmost good faith. All things considered, however, the twelve years following the surrender of General Lee's army were the most demoralizing the Southern States ever experienced, being infinitely more disintegrating than the period covered by the War of Secession. Everything was turned upside down. Because of their participation in the rebellion, a majority of the whites had been disfranchised, while the sceptre of power fell into the hands of the blacks — destitute of knowledge by laws of compulsory ignorance. As is well known, the men who essayed the task of leading these children of the sun during their years of tutelage were adventurers from the North and native whites whom the disturbances of the period had thrown to the surface of politics. These men, denominated respectively in the parlance of that day "carpet-baggers" and "scalawags," while occasionally honest and capable, were on the whole as shameless a set of plunderers as ever exploited the public. By and by the ex-Confederates began to manifest an active interest in politics, and when their disqualifications were removed, they redoubled their efforts to secure control of the Southern local governments. This had the effect of increasing the number of acts of violence, and in the numerous "riots" that ensued not a few men were slain, to say nothing of those who fell by the hand of the hired assassin. The animosity of the whites extended to all whose political views differed from their own, and when threats failed to bring the "carpet-baggers" and "scalawags" to terms, murder was frequently resorted to, the excuse being "it had to be done."

Meanwhile, the "radical" governments had organized the blacks into military companies and union leagues, whose members were armed and regularly drilled. These black soldiers often "carried on" in a high manner, precipitating their own slaughter as well as that of the whites. Nor were the garrisons of United States soldiers, which were quartered in the larger towns, able to check the disorders of the times. Under such circumstances, harmony seemed out of

the question. Another great difficulty that stood in the way of the political union of the two races was the firm conviction of the whites that a huge "conspiracy" existed "up North" whose avowed purpose was their humiliation by the establishment of the "social equality" of the negroes. The latter, on the other hand, believed just as sincerely that the moment the "white folks got into power" the chains of slavery would clank again. Of course the Southern people themselves were largely responsible for the evils of reconstruction, but in spite of errors on their part, the sufferings they underwent were often unavoidable. The upshot of the matter was that about twenty years ago, after having vainly striven by compromises and similar mild measures to rid themselves of their corrupt rulers, the whites gained control of the Southern governments by campaigns of frauds and violence, whose direful results are felt to this day. The years that followed were years of unusual quiet and progress. Business revived; a new impulse was given to the cause of education, and there was everywhere a spirit of hope and enterprise such as the South had never witnessed before. But beneath all the superficial evidences of prosperity, as seen in the construction of railways, and the expansion of commerce, there was the smothered thunder of an approaching earthquake. For the whites rapidly began to learn that it was a far easier matter to count men into office than to count them out again.

It must be remembered that until but yesterday there has been in most sections of the Southern States but one political party. This organization, although styling itself democratic, at one time almost everywhere assumed arbitrary power. To question its policy, to criticise its methods, to refuse to support the men nominated for office by a conclave of its managers or "bosses" was, until very recently, almost as much as a white man's life was worth, and meant the ruin of a newspaper. Many persons tamely submitted to this yoke, because they feared that revolt on their part would have the result of establishing "negro domination,"

an argument the party leaders knew how to use with telling effect. During the first few years of its supremacy, the Democratic party retained the confidence of almost everybody. Its methods were somewhat after this fashion: A few men would assemble in convention, proclaim the nomination of a set of officers often agreed upon by an executive committee beforehand, and then adjourn. By and by, however, the "convention plan" became so unbearable that the plan of having primary elections was adopted. At these "primaries" no one but a member of some Democratic club could vote. The primary attracted universal interest, for it practically decided the result of the regular election since the negroes were virtually disfranchised. It not infrequently happened, however, that the sin of ambition entered the fold to disturb that harmony so delightful to the faithful. It was urged, for instance, that since "Gen." So-and-so had fed at the public crib for several years, by all the principles of Jefferson he should allow Mr. So-and-so the opportunity of repairing his shattered exchequer from the same source; but, naturally enough, he of the military type viewed the subject in an altogether different light. Then again, the rascals who had stuffed ballot-boxes and assassinated negroes began to complain bitterly that their "valuable services" had been ill-requited. During the excitement of such campaigns of crimination and recrimination, candidates often told their opponents that if what they had said was disliked, everybody knew where to find them, which was frequently the prelude to a bloody encounter. When those accused of homicides of this character were brought to trial, of course they were not punished, for that would have seriously injured the party in power. Were they not all good Democrats? Naturally, moreover, the universal consciousness that fraud sat enthroned in high places conveyed to the popular mind a general feeling of doubt regarding the fairness of judges and the honesty of the ministerial officers. In the far South, moreover, no hope could be expected from the party that there called

itself Republican, for it was organized almost solely for the purpose of getting money from the National Executive Committee of that organization.

The first indications of the disruption of the Democratic party in the South began about ten years ago, and its form was the familiar one of a contest between those who were in and those who were out of power. This was accompanied by a healthier tone on the part of the influential press, which no longer hesitated to denounce the rascality and general shortcomings of public servants. At the same time, a disinclination to support the regular nominees of "the party" was also evinced. With the growing bitterness of these political struggles, homicides among the whites grew more frequent, while widespread bickerings and loss of confidence took the place of that solidarity that had formerly characterized the political action of the Southern whites. A still further element of disintegration appeared in the rivalries between the rising municipalities and the less prosperous agricultural communities, — a feeling designing demagogues quickly employed for the purpose of securing office. Such frictions, however, often founded as they are upon the most ignorant prejudices, are having the fortunate result of breaking up the so-called "Solid South." This result achieved, one may well hope to see the development of two political parties in the Southern States, normally constructed, whose mutual contests for supremacy will ensure that protection of life of which our section stands sorely in need.

A still healthier sign of improvement is the outspoken denunciation of homicide one sees in many of the leading newspapers of the South. This is a great change for the better, for it used to be customary to treat the utterances of of the outside world on this subject as unwarrantable impertinence, or the result of sectional prejudice. Even to-day the more belated journals of the South frequently undertake to meet adverse criticisms regarding homicide in our section by citing similar violations of the law in

other portions of the Union. Other newspapers timidly suggest that the law ought to be enforced, because homicides tend to keep out capital and immigration! Be it said to their credit, however, the more intelligent Southern editors denounce murder, sincerely, bravely, and on the very highest grounds. This was notably true, for example, of that fearless champion of human life, the late Captain Francis W. Dawson, of the *Charleston News and Courier*, who, a few years ago, was himself murdered. Many other newspapers could also be mentioned. It is this growing boldness of the press that constitutes one of the greatest promises for the future, because the more influential section of the press can accomplish a reformation of this evil no other human agency can. Their words will prove a greater power for good than a thousand laws making a county liable in damages to a murdered man's relatives. For what jury will award a verdict to the plaintiff if public opinion does not prove strong enough to suppress homicides?

Of the many plans proposed for suppressing murder in the South, it is somewhat surprising that no one appears even to have suggested the abolition of capital punishment. And yet, whatever merits the death penalty may possess, not a few communities have learned that the enforcement of a law depends rather upon the certainty and celerity and justice than upon the severe character of the punishment meted out to the transgressor. The main object should be the prevention of crime, not the punishment of the criminal. A jury, moreover, will frequently render a verdict for the prosecution when the penalty is imprisonment, whereas if the prisoner would be put to death through their conviction they not infrequently give him every possible benefit of doubt. There should also be efforts made to diminish the number of lynchings by affording more adequate protection to women. The plan suggested by that acute critic of American institutions, Mr. Bryce, for example, has much in it to commend it to Southern legislators. Mr. Bryce is inclined to think that a system of mounted

police for the rural districts would be very serviceable. There appears to be no reason why such a force, organized somewhat like the mounted police of Canada, could not do much effective work. An organization of this kind could render especially valuable services in those sparsely settled communities where the houses are far apart and children are obliged to walk several miles to school.

What is needed above everything else in the Southern States in order to effect a radical cure of the homicidal mania, is a general awakening of the public conscience on the subject. Not that good and kindly and humane sentiments are wanting, for no other part of the world has a larger share of those softening and gracious social virtues that make for peace and good will among men. But unfortunately the class that is silent when it ought to speak out and inert when it ought to act, is either afraid to do more than whisper its protests or else supinely leaves things to take their own course. Meanwhile, the crimson tide rises higher and higher, and will in all probability continue to do so until checked through the pressure of outside influence or the spontaneous development of an overpowering local sentiment. Possibly the present lawlessness, unless summarily dealt with, will be succeeded by an even greater spirit of anarchy, when law and order leagues will have to be formed for the express purpose of making public every homicide and of seeing to it that every accused person is duly prosecuted. For no part of the civilized world can always escape the influence of that wide and deep interest in life now so universally present in every branch of human knowledge and activity. This most striking characteristic of the dying century vivifies everything. Its spirit is humane and tender, and its operations extend even to the lower animals. Its influence animates every writer whose productions are worth the reading, for life is the theme of him who seeks to account for the vagaries of individuals as well as of him who traces the careers of nations. It is, moreover, the background of all those larger move-

ments of more recent times whose goal is the protection and elevation of the race. Go where one will, therefore, one will find a solicitude for the well-being of man and brute alike such as this world has never seen before ; and the community that permits the butchery of its members one by another is out of touch with the noblest impulses of the age and will revert to a type of society not found at present among European peoples, unless it be where the crescent has displaced the cross.

B. J. RAMAGE.